

US Inches one Step Closer to War: Senate Foreign Relations Panel Approves Military Action against Syria

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, September 05, 2013
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By Julie Wilson

Wednesday the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved authorization of US military action in Syria. While the vote still needs to be approved by the full Senate next week, the action is a slap in the face for a majority of Americans who oppose any sort of military intervention in the Middle Eastern country.

The “resolution,” which came in at a vote of 10-7, leaves innumerable holes that could allow the White House to “expand military action well beyond what Congress appears to intend,” [reports The Washington Times](#).

“Two Democrats voted ‘no,’ a third voted ‘present’ and five Republicans voted against it, including Rand Paul,” [reports the Daily Mail](#).

Jonathan Weisman, Congressional reporter for the New York Times, [released the following statement](#):

A divided Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday approved an authorization of force against the Syrian regime, setting up a showdown next week in the full Senate on whether President Obama should have the authority to strike.

The 10-7 vote showed bipartisan support for a strike, but bipartisan opposition as well. Yes votes included Senators John McCain, Republican of Arizona, Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee, and Jeff Flake, Republican of Arizona. No votes included Democratic Senators Tom Udall of New Mexico and Chris Murphy of Connecticut. The Senate’s newest member, Edward Markey, Democrat of Massachusetts, voted present.

The resolution would limit strikes against the regime of Bashar al-Assad to 60 days, with the possibility of 30 more days upon consultation with Congress, and it would specifically block the use of ground troops. But to keep Mr. McCain’s crucial support, the committee toughened some of the language.

The panel set aside a resolution by Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky and a fierce opponent of a strike, that would have declared the president has authority to act unilaterally only when the nation faces attack, then approved language by Senators McCain and Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware, to add more rhetorical bite.

The McCain-Coons language noted “absent decisive changes to the present military balance of power on the ground in Syria, sufficient incentives do not yet exist” to force a political settlement of the Syrian civil war. It also reiterated that “it is the policy of the United States to change the momentum on the battlefield in Syria,” urging “a comprehensive U.S. strategy” to not only degrade the regime’s weapons of mass destruction but also to upgrade the military capabilities of “elements of the Syrian opposition.”

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